

# ***FISH & WILDLIFE COMMISSION AGENDA ITEM COVER SHEET***

**Meeting Date:** February 11, 2016

**Agenda Item:** 2016-17 Late Season Migratory Bird Regulations

**Division:** Wildlife

**Action Needed:** Proposed

**Time Needed on Agenda for this Presentation:** 10 minutes

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## **Background**

For ducks, geese, swans, and coots, Montana is in both the Central and Pacific Flyways and follows U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) frameworks based on winter and breeding population status for geese and May population and habitat surveys for ducks. The USFWS has started setting regulations earlier, so Montana FWP is also moving its schedule earlier, with proposals in February and final action in April. The proposed seasons are for the maximum number of hunting days allowed by the USFWS. In order to stay within the limit for the total number of days yet allow for late-season hunting, both flyways have short closures within the seasons thus creating “split” seasons. There are two hunting zones within the Central Flyway for ducks and geese. The Commission has already approved a change for the Central Flyway duck zones, adding Yellowstone and Carbon Counties to the existing 5 counties (Big Horn, Treasure, Rosebud, Custer, and Prairie) to form a 7-county zone (Zone 2) that matches goose Zone 2.

Proposed season dates are similar to 2015-16 dates except for the calendar progression that moves them two days earlier (October 1 opening, instead of October 3).

Proposed dates are as follows:

Pacific Flyway - Ducks, coots, and geese: October 1 - January 8 and January 14-18 (except scaup season closing December 25); Swans: October 8 - December 1

Central Flyway - Ducks and coots: Zone 1 - October 1 - January 5; Zone 2 - October 1 - 9 and October 22 - January 17; Geese - Zone 1 - October 1 - January 8 and January 14-18; Zone 2 - October 1-9 and October 22 - January 25; Tundra swans: October 1 - January 5

A bonus teal season October 1-9 in the CF would allow hunters to take 2 additional blue-winged teal.

Duck, coot, and goose daily bag and possession limits are proposed to be the same as in 2015-16.

## **Public Involvement Process & Results**

The public comment period will run through 5 p.m. April 8, with final adoption at the April 14 Commission meeting.

## **Alternatives and Analysis**

No alternatives were considered.

## **Agency Recommendation & Rationale**

FWP recommends the Commission approve for public comment the proposed 2016-17 late season migratory bird regulations as presented by FWP. The proposed seasons are within the frameworks established by the USFWS.

## **Proposed Motion**

I move the Commission approve for public comment the proposed 2016-17 late season migratory bird regulations as presented by FWP.